

## Message Text

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73

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 IO-14 DRC-01 /127 W

----- 009468

R 071730Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3932

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CAPE TOWN 0417

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, SF

SUBJECT: ACTION BY NEWSPAPER PRESS UNION PROBABLY AVERTS  
POSSIBLE LEGISLATION TO CURB SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS

1. EMBASSY HAS REPORTED THAT NATIONAL PRESS UNION (NPU) HAD MADE AN APPROACH TO PRIME MINISTER VORSTER IN ORDER TO DISSUADE HIM FROM INTRODUCING LEGISLATION IN PARLIAMENT WHICH WOULD PLACE RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF PRESS (CAPE TOWN 0398) - ON AUGUST 4, MR. L.E.A. SLATER, CHAIRMAN OF BOTH NPU AND ARGUS GROUP OF NEWSPAPERS, ANNOUNCED THAT NPU (WHICH IS COMPOSED OF NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS) HAD ADOPTED NEW CODE AND HAD SENT COPY OF IT TO VORSTER.

2. IN ESSENCE, REVISED CODE SETS FORTH ETHICAL STANDARDS WHICH NEWSPAPERS SHOULD FOLLOW AND PROVIDES FOR FINES UP TO TEN THOUSAND RAND (DOLS 15000) FOR VIOLATIONS OF THOSE STANDARDS. JUDGMENTS WOULD BE MADE BY PRESS COUNCIL, A THREE-MEMBER BODY APPOINTED BY NPU. KEY PROVISION OF  
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CODE IS THAT NEWSPAPERS COULD BE FINED BY NPU IF THEY  
ADJUDGED GUILTY OF "RACIAL INCITEMENT." (FULL TEXT WILL

BE POUCHED WHEN OBTAINABLE.)

3. ALTHOUGH SOME NEWSPAPER EDITORS WERE CONSULTED BEFORE REVISED CODE WAS ADOPTED, EDITORS HAD NO VOTE IN NPU'S DECISION. SOME OF THEM HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE NEW CODE. RAYMOND LOUW, EDITOR OF RAND DAILY MAIL, AND JOEL MERVIS, EDITOR OF SUNDAY TIMES, HAVE BEEN MOST OUTSPOKEN. LOUW REJECTED REVISED CODE AS A FORM OF CENSORSHIP AND SAID R 10,000 FINE ENVISAGED WAS OUTRAGEOUS. MERVIS SAID ANY CODE WAS "A NEGATION OF THE BASIC AND ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES OF A FREE PRESS." WE ARE RELIABLY INFORMED, HOWEVER, THAT MOST EDITORS ARE PREPARED TO LIVE WITH NEW CODE. THOUGH REGARDING SOME OF ITS PROVISIONS WITH DISTASTE, THEY FEEL THAT CODE IS MUCH PREFERABLE TO RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION FROM PARLIAMENT. IN ANY EVENT, AS ONE EDITOR PUT IT TO US, "THE THING IS DONE AND THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT, EXCEPT TO MAKE NOISES."

4. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES IN PARLIAMENT, IT NOW IS VERY UNLIKELY THAT NEW RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION AIMED AT THE PRESS WILL BE INTRODUCED IN THIS SESSION OF PARLIAMENT. VORSTER IS EXPECTED TO SAY AS MUCH WHEN HE SPEAKS LATER THIS WEEK DURING NO CONFIDENCE DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT.  
HURD

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** LAW, CENSORSHIP, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, LABOR UNIONS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 07 AUG 1974  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** cunninfx  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
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**Review Authority:** cunninfx  
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**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 30 AUG 2002  
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**Review Transfer Date:**  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ACTION BY NEWSPAPER PRESS UNION PROBABLY AVERTS POSSIBLE LEGISLATION TO CURB SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS  
**TAGS:** PINS, PORS, SF, NPU-NATIONAL PRESS UNION  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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